United Nations E/CN.6/1998/6

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
22 December 1997

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-second session
2-13 March 1998
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Synthesized report on national action plans and strategies for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995) recommended the preparation of implementation strategies or plans of action as one way to encourage and ensure follow-up, implementation and monitoring at the national level.[1] It requested Governments to start developing their strategies or plans of action, as soon as possible, preferably by the end of 1995, in consultation with relevant institutions and non-governmental organizations, and to have them ready by the end of 1996.[2] The General Assembly in its resolution 50/203, recognized that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action rests primarily at the national level. The Assembly emphasized that Governments should develop comprehensive implementation strategies or national plans of action no later than 1996 in order to implement the Platform for Action in full. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1996/6, requested the preparation of a synthesized report on implementation plans of Governments and the United Nations based, *inter alia*, on national action plans and any other sources of information already available in the United Nations system, to be considered by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1998.

2. Member States were invited, in a note verbale of 13 May 1996, to provide copies of their national implementation strategies or plans of action as soon as they were completed. The Subregional Conference of Senior Governmental Experts, which considered the theme "Implementation of the Platform for Action adopted by the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, in Central and Eastern Europe" and was held at Bucharest from 12 to 14 September 1996, elaborated a model action plan that was translated into all official languages and disseminated to all United Nations Member States, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. In its resolution 51/69, the General Assembly welcomed the elaboration of guidelines for national strategies or plans of action by regional and subregional conferences on the implementation of the Platform for Action. By 31 December 1996, 24 Member States had sent in replies to the United Nations. Subsequently, a second note verbale of 16 June 1997 was sent to all Member States requesting them to send in their national action plans as soon as completed.

3. The present report contains an analysis of national action plans submitted officially to the Secretariat in response to the note verbale by a total of 85 Member States and one observer (see annex). The report examines whether plans followed the recommendations of the Platform for Action concerning preparation, content, action defined and resources allocated.[2] Each set of national objectives was compared to the strategic objectives in the Platform for Action to determine trends and priorities, including regional trends and mainstreaming initiatives. The report evaluates whether Member States made policy declarations of a general nature or defined specific action, including legal action. Particular attention was given to the targets and benchmarks established under critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action and how Member States reflected them in their action plans or translated them into national targets. Attention was also paid to commitments made by Member States at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and whether those commitments are referred to in the national action plan. Although voluntary, the implementation of those commitments has been closely monitored, in particular by non-governmental organizations. In line with the mandate for the report, the focus of analysis is on actions that are either planned or in progress. Reference was made to innovative or uncommon approaches if they resulted from the plan or ongoing initiatives. Although preliminary achievements in implementation are assessed based on the information supplied, overall achievements in implementation will be the subject of review and appraisal by the Commission on the Status of Women in the year 2000.

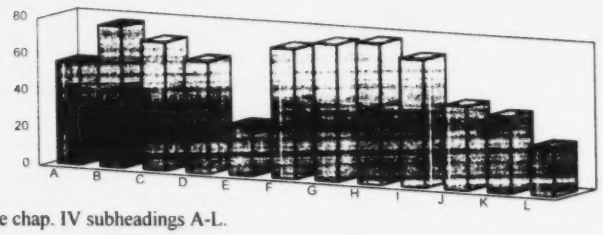
II. Conclusions

4. The scope of analysis contained in the present report has been limited to 86 national action plans and information on their establishment submitted officially by 85 Member States and one observer to the United Nations. Although the reports reflect the considerable efforts that have been made in many countries from all regions, only 46 per cent of the 185 Member States of the United Nations have sent in a national action plan. A regional breakdown of national action plans received shows that 29 per cent of Member States from Africa submitted a plan, 41 per cent from Asia and the Pacific, 38 per cent from Eastern Europe, 41 per cent from Latin America and the Caribbean and 66 per cent from Western Europe and Others.

5. Although all critical areas of concern are covered (see fig. I), action plans tend to reflect national priorities. Many are limited to some critical areas of concern, reflecting regional differences and preferences (see figs. II and III). The total of 86 national action plans reflect the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action as follows: women and poverty (56), education and training (77), women and health

Figure I. Levels of overall response to individual critical areas of concern[a]

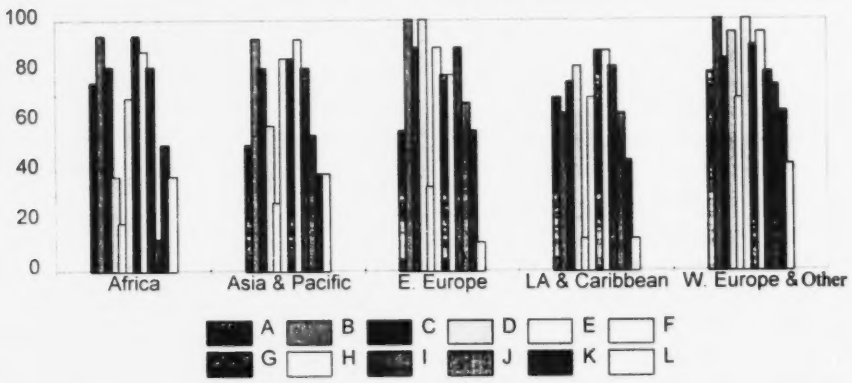
(Percentage of responding countries)



[a] See chap. IV subheadings A-L.

Figure II. Levels of regional response to individual critical areas of concern, by region[a]

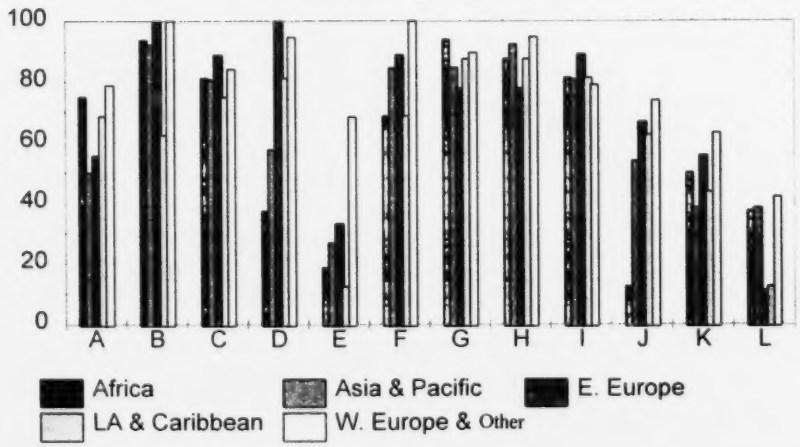
(Percentage of responding countries)



[a] See chap. IV subheadings A-L.

Figure III. Levels of regional response to individual critical areas of concern, by critical area of concern[a]

(Percentage of responding countries)



[a] See chap. IV subheadings A-L.

(70), violence against women (61), women and armed conflict (28), women and the economy (71), women in power and decision-making (75), institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women (77), human rights of women (70), women and the media (46), women and the environment (42) and the girl child (27). In some cases, the national action plans complement sectoral plans in development, education or health, and therefore do not include the details of action proposed in those plans.

6. The analysis indicates that the momentum created by the Fourth World Conference on Women has been sustained at the national level in many countries. The preparatory process was an important event, and represented a milestone towards greater cooperation between various government ministries and civil society. Many national action plans contain information on the preparation process, and followed the recommendations of the Platform for Action that the planning process draw upon persons at the highest level of authority in Government and relevant actors in civil society.[2] The drafting of a national plan was a process that mobilized efforts and commitments at many levels. National action plans were often elaborated in a nationwide dialogue and reflect the national context. In order to further sustain the momentum, special efforts should be made to empower all actors involved in the drafting process so that they become full participants in the process of implementation.

7. Most national machineries were created or strengthened after the Fourth World Conference on Women and played a key role in preparing national action plans. Many Member States refer to the establishment or improvement of national machinery for the advancement of women and its leading role in the overall implementation of the national action plans and achieving the mainstreaming of a gender perspective. They also emphasize the need for strengthening national machinery for the advancement of women by creating coordination mechanisms at ministerial or other levels and by integrating national action plans into larger national development or economic plans. A number of Member States are making specific institutional arrangements to implement the actions proposed under critical areas of concern, including coordination, gender training and regular monitoring by the ministries concerned and national machinery. The efforts of those Member States that have not yet made such arrangements should be supported, and the establishment of appropriate institutional mechanisms should be speeded up through assistance by the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and donors.

8. The international community, in particular the United Nations system, has played a central role in supporting the drafting process in many developing countries and in co-organizing regional or subregional follow-up meetings. In particular, the regional commissions and the national and regional offices of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), have provided assistance for the establishment of national machineries and the preparation of national action plans. They have also supported the efforts of non-governmental organizations. Such efforts must be sustained in the implementation process.

9. The majority of plans contain both general policy recommendations and concrete action proposals. Only a few establish comprehensive time-bound targets and benchmarks or indicators for monitoring. More attention should be given to specific, time-bound national actions and targets in the monitoring process, which would facilitate the implementation of the Platform for Action and make the appraisal by the year 2000 more tangible and transparent.

10. Most countries made no reference to sources of financing for the actions indicated in their plans. In view of the critical importance of budgetary provisions for successful implementation of the Platform for Action, this issue should be given more attention in the implementation of national plans and strategies.

11. Completion and monitoring of national action plans constitutes the basis for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action in the year 2000. National action plans should, therefore, serve as a reference point for preparing future reports on the implementation of the Platform for Action at the national level. This should facilitate the assessment of which policies and projects have been successfully implemented and which have failed, which policy declarations have been converted into concrete policies followed by actions and which remain on paper, which participatory processes have been more effective, which benchmarks have been met and which indicators are accurate for measurement purposes.

12. Many national action plans contain innovative and uncommon ideas and approaches, best practices and lessons learned. The process of collecting such information should continue until the year 2000, which

would enable the Secretariat to include that information in its database and to make it available to interested Governments and non-governmental organizations.

13. Since a majority of Member States have not yet submitted their national action plans and many of them are still in the process of elaborating them, all efforts should be made by the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations and donor countries to provide those States with any assistance required to complete their plans and focus on their implementation.

III. Analysis of action plans and implementation strategies

14. The present section contains information on action plans or implementation strategies, and analyses the different categories of action plans received, at the national as well as at the regional, subregional and interregional levels.

A. National level

15. As of 9 December 1997, a total of 85 Member States and one observer (see annex) had submitted national action plans or information on the process of their preparation. Additional information gathered from the United Nations system indicates that national action plans had been adopted or were being drafted by other Member States, but since no official response had been received from the Governments concerned and their plans had not reached the Secretariat, they could not be included in the analysis.

16. In addition, Member States provided information in statements to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session on progress in preparing national action plans. Four Member States reported that national action plans or various programmes and strategies for the advancement of women had been developed.[3] Two Member States informed that a national plan of action was being elaborated or would soon be adopted by the Government.[4] One Member State indicated that it did not consider itself able to implement the commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action because it lacked the institutional capacity, including the financial and technical resources.[5]

17. The 86 national action plans and strategies submitted to the United Nations in response to the note verbale could be characterized as follows:

(a) Fifty-six national action plans or strategies for action contain commitments to multiple actions in most or all of the critical areas of concern, including institutional and financial arrangements. According to the information provided, 15 of those plans have been approved or adopted by a legislative body. Four plans were drafted and adopted before the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Chile (1994-1999), China (1995-2000, adopted 27 July 1995), Jordan (adopted 1993) and the Russian Federation (approved December 1994). Three Member States submitted sectoral plans related to one or several critical areas of concern. Eight Member States submitted in addition one or more separate reports or information on progress in implementation and statistics;

(b) Fourteen national action plans contain a progress report on actions carried out and selected priorities of ongoing or planned actions;

(c) Eight Member States submitted drafts of national action plans which have not yet been finalized or adopted;

(d) Eight Member States provided information on the status of preparation of the national action plan or national action taken, including priority areas.

B. Regional, subregional and interregional levels

18. The Platform underlines the importance of regional coordination under institutional arrangements.[6] In their national action plans, several Member States plan on greater coordination within international forums of which they are members. Coordination and cooperation within the European Union, the Commonwealth, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Arab League, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) are mentioned in particular. Some Member States make it their goal to set up or strengthen regional groupings. Turkey, for instance, refers to the establishment of a regional Eurasian women's group to work towards the implementation of the Platform for Action.

19. Regional action plans provide guidelines for action for their members. Six action plans on the implementation of the Platform for Action established by

intergovernmental mechanisms have been submitted to the United Nations. Those plans contain detailed proposals on a number of critical areas of concern, and have been formally adopted by their respective policy-making organs.

20. In the Fourth Medium-Term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000) of the European Union (EU), the promotion of partnership between the players involved at the national and community levels is one of five goals. Finland indicates in its national action plans that it intends to play a leadership role within EU when it assumes the presidency, and will insist on the promotion of equality between women and men. The Czech Republic mentions in its information note on the national action plan that it is considering participating in the Medium-Term Programme. Programmes of the Council of Europe are mentioned by a few Members States. Reference is also made to specific Funds of the European Union, such as the Social Fund.

21. The Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, which urges members to establish national plans of action, was endorsed by the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government in November 1995. The Plan aims to strengthen institutional arrangements and processes, and identifies a set of interrelated issues of special concern to the Commonwealth, such as political and human rights and social and economic development.

22. A combined action plan for CARICOM, entitled "Towards regional policy on gender equality and social justice" was endorsed by a special meeting of ministers responsible for the integration of women in development in November 1996. The plan outlines actions in 11 strategic objectives and implementation strategies. Members of CARICOM consider the plan to be their strategy for implementation. A regional seminar held in Guyana in August 1997, at which many members of CARICOM presented national follow-up plans, served as an opportunity to exchange views on progress achieved at the subregional level. CARICOM, the Inter-American Development Bank and various international donors are also providing assistance to the implementation process.

23. A Unified Arab Programme for Action, which focuses on the alleviation of poverty, participation in decision-making and partnership in the family, was adopted by the ministerial segment of the Arab Conference for Formulating a Programme for Action and Follow-up Mechanism to the Fourth World Conference (Amman, 25-29 September 1996), which was convened by the League of Arab States and co-organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

24. A plan of action for promoting women's equal participation in economic development in Indochina was adopted by the Governments of Viet Nam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia at the Indochina Seminar on Promoting Women's Participation in Economic Development, organized at Hanoi in January 1996, by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in collaboration with the Viet Nam Women's Union. The plan laid the foundation for drafting the national action plans of the three countries.

25. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) reported the development of a draft subregional plan of action by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and an eastern African subregional support initiative for the implementation of the African and global Platforms for Action.

26. The Seventh Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago, 19-21 November 1997), evaluated the obstacles and progress achieved with regard to the Regional Programme of Action 1995-2001, which was adopted at Mar de Plata in 1994. The Conference adopted the Santiago Consensus, which called for measures to achieve full implementation.

C. Preparatory process of establishing national action plans

1. National level

27. In many countries, the first initiative after the Fourth World Conference on Women was the translation of the Platform for Action into local languages or the publication of a summary of the Platform for Action in accessible language. The United Arab Emirates, for example, held several seminars on the Platform for Action. In many Member States, the planning process included a series of meetings at the national level, primarily initiated by the national machinery for the advancement of women. Those meetings were held in consultation with government institutions and non-governmental organizations. In the Congo, for example, the national plan emerged from a series of meetings at the national level involving the National Forum of Women.

In other countries, the draft was made available to all relevant organizations and representatives from civil society for comments, as was the case in El Salvador. In Canada, universities, non-governmental organizations and community groups supported the planning process. It is not yet known what effect the consultative process will have on the implementation of the plan.

28. In many Member States, the planning process was mainly conducted at the ministerial level, involving many or all ministries concerned early in the preparatory process. In Bangladesh, 13 ministries were involved in the drafting and were assigned lead roles in implementation. Venezuela, which is in the process of drafting its national plan, intends to involve the Central Office of Statistics and Information, and the Office for the Coordination and Planning of the Republic in the drafting of the final national action plan. In Germany, federal states and non-governmental organizations formulated individual demands that were incorporated into the plan. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Friends of the Ministry and the Male Support Group serve in advisory capacities.

29. In some cases, the national action plan for the advancement of women was integrated into a national development plan. The Philippines used a dual approach by developing a separate, long-term 30-year Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (1995-2025) in parallel to the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan, expecting that gender issues would become mainstream issues in a 30-year time-frame.

2. Support from the international community

30. Although the main support for the planning process was provided at the national level and mostly through the Government and the national machinery for the advancement of women, reference is made in some plans from Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific to international or bilateral assistance. In Panama, for example, the European Union, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations supported the planning process. The national action plan of Lebanon was drafted in cooperation with UNIFEM.

31. The United Nations system played a central role in supporting the drafting process. In particular, regional commissions have assisted many Member States and non-governmental organizations in the preparation of their national action plans. The Economic Commission for Africa, for example, provided guidelines for the elaboration of national action plans to all its Member States and advisory services to a number of non-governmental organizations, such as the African Women's Development Network (FEMNET).

32. UNIFEM provided assistance and organized meetings in all regions. It convened a colloquium at Harare in 1996 to devise regional strategies for the Platform for Action that focus on women's economic empowerment. A key recommendation was that UNIFEM and its partners cooperate closely in developing strategies for mainstreaming gender into the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), SADC and other regional organizations. UNIFEM also supported an African regional workshop on post-Beijing strategies and priorities at Dakar in 1997. It sponsored jointly with other donors a post-Beijing political summit in Nigeria, which culminated in the drafting of a political agenda for Nigerian women. In Thailand, UNIFEM supported an initiative on mainstreaming gender, and supported governmental and non-governmental implementation of the Platform for Action through a gender and development working group. In Western Asia, UNIFEM, together with the European Union, supported the establishment of national machineries and non-governmental committees in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, Yemen and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In Latin America, UNIFEM assisted the national machineries in Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay in developing their national action plans. UNIFEM and UNICEF held a regional meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean in Cuba to define strategies for promoting dialogue and collaboration between Governments and non-governmental organizations.

33. UNICEF reported that it had been actively involved in the preparation of national action plans. Its country programmes included specific activities for collaboration and support in the collection of data disaggregated by sex, capacity-building, innovative programme strategies, public awareness, women's rights and the empowerment of women. The regional UNICEF office for Eastern and Southern Africa, for instance, joined the Government of Uganda and OAU in organizing a regional conference for ministers of education and senior administrators from 35 African countries on women's education and literacy at Kampala in September 1996, which adopted the Kampala Declaration and made a commitment to reduce gender disparities in education.

34. UNFPA noted that it provided support to the Governments of Bangladesh, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda in formulating their

national plans of action. Jointly with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNFPA assisted Mauritania, *inter alia*, in the training of senior government officials in planning and design of action plans and for the elaboration of a national policy on family issues. UNESCO reported that it provided support to Burundi, Cuba, Ecuador, Jordan, Mauritania and Oman in the establishment and implementation of national action plans. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) assisted in the Conference follow-up and in the implementation of specific projects in Botswana, the Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea and the Philippines.

35. Some Governments received assistance in translating the Platform for Action into local languages. UNFPA provided support to Mongolia for the printing of the Platform for Action in English and Mongolian. In Nigeria, UNIFEM and the local United Nations information centre supported the translation and publication of the Platform for Action into Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo.

36. In addition, the United Nations system has made efforts to implement the Platform for Action in line with recommendations contained under institutional arrangements, when it established the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women which is to be reviewed in 1998 (see E/CN.6/1998/3).

D. Institutional and financial arrangements

37. One prerequisite for successful implementation is the establishment of institutional arrangements that will guarantee the implementation of plans and strategies and monitor achievements (for detailed analysis, see sect. IV.H below).

38. Another prerequisite is to establish financial arrangements. However, most countries do not indicate how the actions to implement the Beijing Platform for Action are to be funded. Among those plans (20) which do mention the allocation of resources, several countries (16) address funding in general or at existing levels. Few national action plans refer to additional levels of funding and resources. None refers to a reduction in excessive military expenditures and investment for arms production and acquisition, as suggested in the Platform for Action.[7]

39. Member States who make reference to national sources for financing proposed activities often refer to specific projects or pilot projects. A limited number of Member States provide detailed information on resources, often for projects being already implemented. The national action plan of Germany, for instance, contains information on the amount allocated to various initiatives and programmes, including for homeless women, disabled women, the promotion of women in universities and pilot projects in voluntary political commitment.

40. Most countries (52) did not link the actions indicated in their national action plans to specific time-bound targets. However, Mali's national plan explicitly addresses the mobilization of resources for nationally selected critical areas of concern, and indicates the annual budgeted amounts and the funding source for each sector over a five-year period from 1996-2000. With regard to the recommendations of the Platform for Action on setting benchmarks for the achievement of certain levels of budget allocations,[8] the Congo is one of few that targets 20 per cent of its national budget for social concerns, with a portion specifically reserved for activities related to women.

41. Some Member States provide information on financial mechanisms that would assist women's projects or the creation of an enabling environment for the mobilization of resources by non-governmental organizations.[9] For instance, Luxembourg reports that projects by non-governmental organizations that promote women's activities may receive 300 per cent co-financing by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women.

42. In the framework of development cooperation, frequent reference is made to bilateral assistance, either in the context of North-South or South-South cooperation, as mentioned by Tunisia. Many plans include existing support or provide detailed descriptions of assistance requested and received. Many developing countries report on assistance from multilateral or bilateral donors. Several countries in Latin America and in Asia and the Pacific address the issue of resource allocation and mobilization. Panama has established a budget for the implementation of proposals contained in its national action plan, of which major portions are to be financed externally. In particular, the draft action plans of Bangladesh and Pakistan identify international development cooperation and external donors as potential funding sources. The national action plan of Mali specifies projects in the field of advancement of women to be financed by the United Nations system or by bilateral donors.

43. Some donor countries provide information in their national action plans on the type of projects to be supported. In line with commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Denmark reports continuing its international development cooperation with over 1 per cent of gross national product (GNP) funding; Germany plans to spend $10 million per annum over the next four years for legal and sociopolitical counselling in developing countries, with special emphasis on women; and Luxembourg will increase international development assistance to 0.7 per cent of GNP by the year 2000.

IV. Critical areas of concern in the plans and strategies

44. The analysis of the strategic objectives and actions contained in the national action plans and strategies within each critical area of concern include common criteria for classification and evaluation, such as the number of Member States reporting on a particular issue; commitments made by Member States at the Fourth World Conference on Women in the particular critical area; reference to and use of benchmarks and/or targets; the mainstreaming of a gender perspective; legislative and administrative actions; institutional arrangements; and the allocation of resources. Other categories applied according to the information provided include ongoing action before the Conference; innovative or uncommon approaches not contained in the Platform for Action; public information campaigns, outreach activities and partnerships; monitoring and evaluation; and attention to special groups.

45. Within each critical area of concern, the following structure was adopted in order to ensure a consistent presentation throughout the report: an initial summary, providing an overview and analysis of the issues related to the strategic objectives and actions contained in the critical area of concern; a series of main issues addressed by the national action plans; and finally, any issues not covered by the Platform for Action, including innovative or uncommon approaches.

A. Women and poverty

46. Fifty-six national action plans and strategies (65 per cent) establish policies and programmes for the eradication of poverty among women. At the Fourth World Conference on Women, some Member States had made a commitment towards poverty eradication in their public statements. An analysis of national action plans indicates that they follow closely the conclusions and recommendations under this critical area. One third of the plans underline the importance of reviewing, adopting and maintaining macroeconomic policies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty (strategic objective A.1). That trend reflects a growing consensus to encourage sustained economic growth and address the structural causes of poverty. Most plans focus on the absence of economic opportunities, lack of access to productive resources and capital, lack of access to education and training and inadequate provision of social safety nets (strategic objective A.2). The economic empowerment of women is considered by Governments as a crucial element in breaking the cycle of poverty. Accordingly, most national action plans in this area focus on a two-pronged strategy: promoting employment and income-generating activities for women both in rural and urban areas, and providing basic social services and improving social security systems for women in poverty. The elimination of unemployment among women is the focus of attention of Governments in all regions. This critical area is closely related to areas F (Women and the economy) and B (Education and training of women).

47. Twenty-seven plans propose policies and programmes aimed at creating various types of employment schemes in both the formal and informal sectors. Some national action plans from the Latin American and Caribbean region emphasize the economic empowerment of women through expanding their opportunities in employment and training. Ecuador, for example, is considering a proposal to restructure the allocation of public expenditures to promote women's economic opportunities. Mexico is providing grants or scholarships to poor girls and young women, while Venezuela is implementing educational programmes for indigenous women.

48. Sixteen plans from the African region focus on encouraging women's income-generation activities and improving their access to economic resources, credit and technology (strategic objective A.2). Swaziland, for instance, plans to review existing legislation in order to remove barriers to economic participation of women, especially those related to land and property rights. The Congo has created financial funds to promote women's productive activities. The United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe plan to establish women's banks. A few national action plans from Latin America and the

Caribbean are also considering the revision of laws, especially agricultural codes and regulations, in order to facilitate women's access to economic resources, including land. Eighteen countries indicate that they intend to improve women's access to credit for obtaining housing.

49. Measures aimed at improving or reorganizing social security systems in order to provide allowances and benefits to women, particularly to single parents and children, are proposed in 24 plans. In 1997, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland began a three-year pilot programme entitled "Parent plus", which provides income support to single parents as an incentive to return to work.

50. Many plans target specific groups of women. The Government of Bulgaria will provide a universal allowance to cover expenses for transportation and rehabilitation services for more than 100,000 physically disabled women. Brazil is developing community programmes for sheltering older women. A few countries focus on the needs and concerns of women migrants. Thirty-two plans contain measures aimed at the improvement of the socio-economic status of females who head households, recognizing that they are among the poorest section of the population. Argentina, for example, is planning to introduce positive action programmes for female-headed households.

51. The issue of mainstreaming a gender perspective into social and economic policies is a concern for 24 countries from all regions. Brazil, for instance, plans to organize gender training for employees in the Ministries of Labour and Agriculture. Mongolia intends to mainstream a gender perspective in its poverty alleviation programme, and to introduce mechanisms for the elimination of poverty among women. In addition, eight plans include measures aimed at mainstreaming the gender perspective into international development cooperation policies and programmes, with special focus on gender-specified poverty reduction. The United States Agency for International Development is adopting a gender plan for action to improve the situation of women and girls globally. France has established a committee on gender and development, and is organizing regular seminars on that issue. Sweden is providing economic support for development in the Republics of the former USSR, with special emphasis on gender equality.

52. Twenty-five national action plans from all regions have proposed concrete actions to promote research on gender aspects of poverty, develop conceptual tools and practical methodologies to conduct gender impact analysis of all policies and programmes, and improve data collection. Norway, for example, has conducted a research project on poverty in Nordic countries. A poverty forum was established in Zimbabwe under the auspices of the Institute for Development Studies to carry out poverty assessment studies for policy-making. In addition, many Governments are focusing on the improvement of primary health care, nutrition and primary education as a means of reducing poverty.

53. A few national action plans identify targets for poverty alleviation among women. China will provide professional training to 10 million women in poverty-stricken areas, alleviate 200,000 households out of poverty and provide jobs for 800,000 poor women. Mongolia's goal is to reduce the poverty rate among women to 50 per cent of its 1994 level, or 10 per cent of women, by the year 2000, and to eliminate extreme poverty. Viet Nam is planning to reduce the number of poor households to 10 per cent and eliminate hunger by the year 2000.

54. In terms of innovative and uncommon approaches, Brazil and Ecuador intend to map female poverty and to monitor the impact of macroeconomic and social policies on women, taking racial concerns into account. In the Western Europe and Others region, there is an emphasis on reviewing pension benefits for women. Proposed changes in pension laws include the consideration of child-raising periods and an increase of maternity allowances and widows' pensions. Denmark, for example, organized a conference on women and pensions in 1996.

B. Education and training of women

55. Seventy-seven Member States (89 per cent) consider education and training of women a priority concern in their national action plans. Fifteen of those Member States made a commitment on education at the Fourth World Conference on Women and include it as a critical area in their plans, although only two make a direct reference to the earlier commitment. Although Member States refer equally to all strategic objectives in the Platform for Action under this area, few refer to the specific benchmarks with regard to providing universal access to basic education, closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education[10] and reducing the female illiteracy rate to at least half of its 1990 level.[11]

Member States propose a variety of actions, often very specific and tailored to national educational needs.

56. Some national action plans (12) establish national benchmarks in education. Eight national action plans from the African region address girls' access to primary and basic schooling. Mali sets a specific target to achieve a 20 per cent increase in girls' schooling by the year 2000. In half of the plans from Asia and the Pacific, a national goal for the improvement of basic and primary education is established. By the year 2000, Mongolia aims to enrol 95 per cent of girls and boys in primary schools and 90 per cent of boys and girls in secondary schools. In Western Asia, Palestine plans to have a basic school in every village. In Latin America and the Caribbean, El Salvador intends to extend schooling in rural areas up to sixth grade, while all other plans from the region have not established goals with regard to basic and primary education.

57. Eradication of illiteracy among women is recognized as a priority by many Member States (23) but few have set national targets. In Africa, few plans set specific benchmarks for the eradication of illiteracy. Mali intends to achieve a 20 per cent increase in literacy among women by the year 2000. In Asia and the Pacific, few plans set benchmarks that could be used as indicators for monitoring progress. Most national action plans from all regions identify special target groups in need of literacy training, such as rural women, migrants, refugees, women with disabilities and indigenous women, a trend most visible in Latin America and the Caribbean.

58. To achieve equal opportunities for women and girls in education, Member States intend to undertake a variety of measures, including research on the causes of gender differences in schooling, such as drop-out rates and low performance of girls; information campaigns and counselling to raise public awareness on the importance of girls' education; parents' education; and scholarships and affirmative action programmes and quota systems, in particular at the tertiary level. The University of Zimbabwe has introduced affirmative action to increase the number of women at the university level. Denmark plans to increase the number of female doctoral students and university professors. Finland's project "Finns' skills in mathematics and natural science in 2002" is intended to attain a 40 per cent participation of girls in mathematics and science courses in secondary schools and 30 per cent women in technical fields by the year 2000. Several Member States in Latin America and the Caribbean target young mothers and pregnant teenage students and drop-outs. Other countries design measures to reach out to disadvantaged groups, such as the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia, women with disabilities and women in poverty in Canada, single parents in the United Kingdom, immigrants in Norway, women with special needs in Ecuador, and rural women in Swaziland and Mongolia.

59. Women's access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education (strategic objective B.3) is a priority in many plans (25). To attract more women and girls to science, countries in Western Europe and in Latin America aim to increase vocational training opportunities and recruit women and girls in non-traditional fields of study. There are similar efforts in other regions. The Islamic Republic of Iran, for example, continues to maintain a 50 per cent quota for women in the medical fields. Syria will train women in modern technology. China's goal is to have one female agro-technician or technician in animal husbandry in every village on average. National reports from Latin America and Eastern Europe specify target groups to be addressed in vocational training, including women prisoners in Venezuela and Brazil and unemployed women in Romania and Belarus. Lifelong education (strategic objective B.6) is addressed in general terms in some national action plans (17). They often target specific groups, such as unemployed or illiterate women.

60. Non-discriminatory education and training (strategic objective B.4) is a priority for Western Europe and Others and Latin America and the Caribbean. Many action plans from Western Europe and Others (18) plan to remove bias from teaching material and curricula, to promote gender training for teachers and counsellors, and to support women studies and gender research. Israel reconfirms the position of a Supervisor of Gender Equality in the Ministry of Education as an ombudsman for monitoring. Few plans from Latin America and the Caribbean refer to the involvement of the national machinery for the advancement of women or non-governmental organizations in efforts to make the educational system more gender sensitive.

61. Little information is provided on action related to both financial resources and monitoring of educational reforms. A few plans discuss the mobilization of additional funds from private and public-sector institutions, foundations and others, as suggested in the Platform for Action.[12] For instance, the Philippines intends to allocate funds for the development of women's studies in the educational curriculum and teacher training. Mali includes a detailed financial plan in its national action plan. Some Member States from Western Europe

and Others provide information on financial resources, although more address specific projects or progress achieved. Others refer to the allocation of resources for specific programmes or pilot projects, such as funding for research on gender equality in sports and culture in Finland, support for women scientists in France, or funding for cultural projects and research by Aboriginal women's organizations in Canada.

62. With regard to institutional mechanisms in the educational system, El Salvador, for instance, plans to create an inter-institutional system to follow up and evaluate the implementation of agreements, programmes and policies for equal opportunities in education. Luxembourg plans to support, coordinate and monitor the policy of equal opportunities by creating the necessary institutional structures. Specific monitoring mechanisms are proposed by Argentina, Iraq and Belarus.

63. With regard to the content of education and training, including extracurricular activities, reference is made to education on human rights and legal literacy, leadership training and civic education, including voter education and new technologies. Some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean refer to sexual education, reproductive health education and pre-marriage education. Some national action plans, in particular from six countries from the Arab region, underline the importance of early childhood development and education, including the provision of facilities and adequate teacher training, an area not addressed in the Platform for Action. The Syrian Arab Republic, for example, wants to open kindergartens in various regions. The importance of sports and physical activity for girls and women is stressed in a number of action plans from all regions except Africa. Overall plans focus on helping girls and women to develop higher self-esteem.

C. Women and health

64. Women and health is a priority issue in 70 national action plans (81 per cent). Fifteen of these made a public commitment to women's health at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Only one country mentioned the specific Beijing commitment. In general, Member States propose several types of action, while giving particular attention to reproductive health. A minority of Member States addressed the Platform for Action's specific targets under women and health with regard to the reduction of maternal mortality,[13] of infant and child mortality in line with internationally approved goals,[14] and of worldwide malnutrition among children under the age of five and in iron deficiency anaemia in girls and women.[15]

65. The targets mostly referred to are reduction of maternal and infant mortality (15). In Latin America, Brazil and Ecuador aim to reduce the maternal mortality rate to 50 per cent of its current level by the year 2000. In Africa, Morocco targets a 25 per cent reduction in maternal mortality, a 50 per cent reduction of maternal mortality in hospitals and a reduction by one third of neonatal mortality by the year 2000. Few plans mention iron deficiency anaemia in girls and women. China, however, is planning to make iodine available to 95 per cent of newly wed or pregnant women who need it by the year 2000.

66. A majority of Member States from all regions make policy declarations of a general nature to increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services (strategic objective C.1). A few make specific reference to the right to health. For instance, Panama states that its national strategic objective is to promote women's access to health information and services as a human right. Swaziland intends to promote women's rights to the attainment of the highest level of mental, physical and reproductive health. Some national action plans, mainly from Latin America, refer to codes of ethics for health professionals related to prevention, research and health-care delivery. A few mention the creation of conditions that ensure the dignity of persons who seek health treatment or receive sexual and reproductive health services, in particular the right to privacy and confidentiality. Venezuela, for instance, intends to establish ethical committees to monitor the respect of human rights in mental health. In Canada's plan, ethical questions are raised concerning reproductive technologies. Women's equal access to social security systems throughout the whole life cycle[16] is referred to in a few plans, mostly in conjunction with specific target groups, such as elderly women in the case of Mexico or working mothers in the Republic of Korea.

67. With regard to women's sexual and reproductive health, many national action plans (34) address the provision of access to family planning, contraceptives and family planning techniques. The establishment of family planning services, their availability in rural areas and possible integration into primary health-care centres, and the services of trained midwives are addressed in several plans. Quality obstetric care and prenatal care is a priority. For example, El Salvador sets clear targets for an increase in professional assistance in deliveries and

prenatal care. Morocco establishes specific targets for safe delivery, perinatal and postnatal care in rural and urban areas. Some plans from all regions highlight the importance of breastfeeding. Abortion in mentioned in some plans, in particular from Latin America and the Caribbean. For instance, Brazil is considering changes in legislation which contains punitive measures against women who have undergone illegal abortions.[17] A few plans refer to a desired increase in birth rates and the treatment of infertility. Campaigns, educational programmes and the integration of family planning and sex education into curricula are mentioned in many plans (15). Many also emphasize the importance of reaching out to men in family planning.

68. Many Member States from almost all regions (21) consider action against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) as a priority concern. The Congo's goal, for instance, is to inform all adults about modes of HIV/AIDS infection and means of protection against the virus. Counselling and information campaigns are favoured activities in Western Europe and Latin America. Many recognize the need for more research. With regard to HIV/AIDS treatment, Luxembourg, for example, will encourage the participation of infected women in the elaboration of policies and programmes. Specific target groups, such as drug users, sex workers, pregnant women and indigenous women, are mentioned in few plans (5). The involvement of non-governmental organizations in combatting the HIV/AIDS virus and STDs is mentioned in a few others.

69. All national action plans address specific health conditions of women, particularly ageing, drug use and abuse, including smoking and mental health. Japan, for instance, develops a number of actions related, *inter alia*, to health and welfare measures and nursing systems for the elderly. Other areas specifically mentioned in national action plans are violence, environmental health, occupational health, disability and traditional practices, including female genital mutilation.

70. The achievement of food security is mentioned as a priority in few plans, for example by Haiti. The Niger wants to conduct research on food taboos and interdictions. Information campaigns and educational programmes in schools and targeted to special groups are considered by some an important tool in achieving public awareness on nutrition, hygiene and a healthy lifestyle, and in combating eating disorders, such as anorexia, bulimia and obesity. Many place emphasis on the importance of regular physical activity and sports.

71. National action plans from all regions emphasize the importance of more research on a variety of health issues, including family planning, teenage pregnancies, fertility and reproductive health and traditional knowledge. Cambodia will undertake a holistic health sector survey, with a focus on medical, water/sanitation and education, as well as regional development. Some highlight the need to have more women in leadership positions in medical professions, including in research and science. Bahrain will provide education and overseas scholarships to women. The collection and dissemination of health data disaggregated by sex is referred to in many plans. Actions aimed at health-care workers are intended to increase the number of women in health-care delivery, as indicated by China and the Islamic Republic of Iran; improve training for health workers, as suggested in the draft plan of Pakistan; and provide gender training to all health-care professionals in the private or public sectors. This is emphasized in as many as 17 plans, in particular from Western Europe and Others and Latin America and the Caribbean.

72. With regard to resources and monitoring (strategic objective C.5), few plans provide details on increases in budgetary allocations. Romania intends to increase budgetary subsidies, while also trying to find new alternative resources for medical services. Development cooperation is mentioned in three plans from Western Europe. For instance, in Norway the provision of high-quality health care, including reproductive health, is an international priority.

73. The mainstreaming of a gender perspective into health coordination mechanisms is a goal in 12 national action plans, in particular from Latin America. Some Member States are taking steps to introduce institutional arrangements to ensure the implementation of their action plan in the area of women and health, either through the establishment of women's health bureaus or integrated health services or by means of decentralization. Indonesia's plan of action in the field of health is to be carried out through integrated cooperation among various departments and offices related to health, population and family planning, home affairs, information and women studies centres, under the coordination of the Office of the State Minister for the Role of Women.

74. Prevention (strategic objective C.2) is on the agenda of all plans focusing on health, in particular with regard to early detection and treatment of breast, cervical and other cancers of the reproductive system, but also of sexually transmitted diseases. Slovakia encourages

women to take regular oncological and cardiological controls.

75. One innovative or uncommon approach in the United States of America is that the Public Health Services Office on Women's Health has forged a unique partnership with the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense in a programme entitled "From missiles to mammograms", which is designed to improve the early detection of breast cancer by transferring imaging technologies from the intelligence communities used for target recognition and missile guidance to medical prevention and detection.

D. Violence against women

76. Sixty-one national action plans from all regions (71 per cent), including those from States who had made commitments at the Fourth World Conference on Women (11), incorporate a section relating to measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women, including trafficking in women. However, most plans do not indicate how projected actions with regard to violence against women are to be funded, and a minority identify the amount of resources allocated for implementation. Some plans indicate that they provide overseas development assistance to developing countries for actions relating to violence against women.

77. A majority of plans (42) report on initiatives to adopt or review legislation with a view to creating a legal framework to address violence against women. Many plans (36) promise the review of sanctions to discourage violence against women and girls and to redress the harm experienced by victims. For example, the United Kingdom proposes that on conviction of a second violent offence, including rape or attempted rape, a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment should apply.

78. Many plans (28) report on the introduction of mechanisms to provide women with improved access to the legal system and to inform women of their rights. For example, Ecuador will raise awareness, especially within the Quechua community, of the Law Against Violence against Women and the Family. Indonesia plans to strengthen the role of its Legal Consultancy Agency where women and children are concerned, and to increase services and legal assistance, particularly to low-income groups.

79. A significant number of plans (34) describe shelters and other services available to women and girls subjected to violence, and indicate intentions to strengthen such services. For example, Germany intends to integrate pre-existing shelters into a national network. Bulgaria notes that it has sought financing from UNDP to establish a network of shelters.

80. Some plans, the majority from the Western European and Others region, describe measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women.[18] In early 1997, Sweden convened a conference on men and violence that focused on men's responsibility in relation to violence against women. Norway plans to continue to provide financial support for treatment centres that offer therapy and counselling to violent men.

81. Many plans (30) from all regions refer to campaigns designed to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of violence against women, with several suggesting that the best way to counteract violence is through such campaigns. For example, Finland stressed that although the topic of violence is taboo in Finnish society, anti-violence campaigns have had a significant impact, and it will continue such campaigns in partnership with non-governmental organizations. Sixteen plans from most regions specifically propose educational and training programmes to promote gender equality and non-violent forms of conflict resolution directed at children and adolescents.

82. Many plans (19), particularly from Latin America and the Caribbean, focus on the importance of the media in combating violence against women by eliminating presentations that encourage such violence. El Salvador noted that it has already established a national award for media that promote non-violence and gender equality. Bangladesh aims to use the media to disseminate information and research findings on the issue of trafficking in women and girls. The Philippines plans to draft and adopt guidelines on the coverage and treatment of rape and other violent crimes in order to ensure greater respect for the privacy of women victims and to stop the sensational coverage of crimes against women.

83. Plans from many regions (36) address the provision of training for relevant personnel, including those who are involved in the promotion of women's rights or the provision of assistance for victims. Some plans explicitly address the training of the judicial and legal community, while others focus on the training of law enforcement personnel or police. For example, the plans of Japan and Swaziland both note that relevant personnel must be trained to respond to victims to avoid the infliction of further psychological harm during the judicial process.

Austria is in addition providing training to teachers, social workers and medical doctors.

84. Several plans describe initiatives to improve community relations with law enforcement agencies. Bangladesh, for example, has introduced cultural programmes to highlight the role of the police as a friend of the community. Bolivia plans to establish 10 women's police stations, while the Philippines will establish, in strategically placed police stations, a national police women's desk that will deal with cases of violence against women.

85. Many national action plans (34) from all regions report on the development of initiatives to study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of measures introduced to address such violence. For example, Israel notes that a parliamentary inquiry was appointed in 1995 to investigate cases of women murdered by their spouses or partners. Venezuela will compile statistics relating to the legal process, in particular the effect of the judicial process on women. Canada aims to support social policy research focusing on means to reduce violence against women migrants and women who are members of ethno-cultural and visible minorities. Brazil intends to encourage universities and non-governmental organizations to undertake research on violence in rural areas.

86. A few plans describe policies that allow women who have suffered or fear they will suffer gender-based persecution, including violence, to apply for refugee status or residence permits. Measures to address trafficking in women, violence against victims of traffic and violence related to prostitution are referred to in many plans (21) from all regions except Africa. Several plans report on schemes to provide legal assistance to victims of trafficking who seek legal redress. According to Poland's plan, diplomatic and consular representations should cooperate with local police, jurisdiction and organizations providing assistance to Polish victims of violence abroad. Spain is examining the possibility of introducing temporary residence permits for victims of trafficking who wish to testify in court proceedings. A number of plans describe bilateral cooperation to address trafficking in women. The United States plan reports that the United States Agency for International Development intends to initiate a project in South Asia relating to trafficking in women. Increased attention to trafficking and tourism is also being paid by the Czech Republic and Japan, while Cuba seeks to combat sex tourism by including positive images of women in tourist literature.

87. The approach of national action plans to prostitution varies; some condemn forced prostitution only, others condemn all forms of prostitution and related activities. Thus, for example, Lithuania reports that it is investigating ways of legalizing prostitution and will canvass public opinion in that regard. The Russian Federation is developing legislation aimed at reducing the scale of prostitution, while China describes its intention of banning prostitution.

88. The links between migration and the sex industry are identified in several plans from the Western European region. A number of plans make explicit mention of the phenomenon of "mail-order brides". Germany reports on measures of international outreach and education, including the production of brochures in various languages, for potential brides from countries abroad. Australia has funded the development of two videos designed to assist women in understanding their legal rights and in making informed decisions about marriage and migration.

89. Cross-sectoral approaches to the elimination of violence against women are described in several plans. For example, the Finnish plan describes the Plan for Social Welfare and Health Care, coordinating the activities of the Ministries of the Interior, Justice, Education and Social Affairs, and Health, which is designed to prevent violence against women and introduce new modalities, including with regard to treatment.

90. In terms of innovative and uncommon approaches, Bolivia plans to establish integrated legal services country-wide, emphasizing rural areas, which will promote women's rights through the promotion of intersectoral coordination and the provision of legal assistance. Israel plans to establish a facility to receive violent men. The United Kingdom plans to introduce a new civil claim (tort) which would allow victims of harassment or stalking to apply for an injunction, the breach of which would be punishable by up to five years imprisonment.

E. Women and armed conflict

91. Twenty-eight Member States (32 per cent), among them 13 from the Western European and Other region, elaborated specific actions to be taken in pursuit of the strategic objectives under this critical area, all of which were addressed by Member States. Of the 28 national

action plans, three made commitments in this area at Beijing, two of which were mentioned in the plans.

92. In order to increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation (strategic objective E.1) some Member States, notably Chile, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein, specifically make reference to mainstreaming a gender perspective in security and conflict resolution policies. Some Member States focus more on the inclusion of women in the armed forces, official delegations and peace missions. Others have proposed material and humanitarian support for women in armed conflict situations. For example, Luxembourg proposes a gender-balanced composition of members of international organizations and sensitivity training for them in matters of sexual harassment, which many women in conflict situations face. In its national action plan, the Palestinian Authority stresses the need for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and calls upon United Nations Member States to abide by the commitments to finance the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). For Liechtenstein, the appointment of women as special representatives of the Secretary-General is highly desirable.

93. Few Member States refer to the reduction of excessive military expenditures and control of the availability of armaments (strategic objective E.2). Norway indicates that the anti-personnel landmines stockpile of its army has been destroyed. The United Kingdom seeks to do likewise within the context of a total international ban. The call for a comprehensive nuclear testing ban, as well as for redoubled efforts in disarmament, is almost unanimous. Denmark and Luxembourg propose the involvement of women at the level of decision-making in the national and multilateral peacemaking processes, such as in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

94. In order to promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution, reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations (strategic objective E.3) and promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace (strategic objective E.4) a number of Member States take the same approach: all focus on education and training as a means of effecting a culture change and promoting non-violent conflict resolution. The Congo, Nigeria and Bulgaria, for instance, propose to introduce peace and human rights studies and research in the educational curriculum. Germany plans to establish study centres for learning non-violent conflict resolution. The Congo is also proposing the involvement and strengthening of non-governmental organizations in this area. Nigeria plans to establish a peace research unit in the African First Ladies Peace Mission Secretariat. Other concerns under this strategic objective, such as rape in the conduct of armed conflict and ethnic cleansing, are not addressed in national action plans.

95. As to strategic objective E.5, the prevalent approaches are women-specific asylum policies and support measures, as reflected in Canada's Women at Risk Programme, or Denmark and Liechtenstein's proposed asylum regulations. In protecting women in its internal conflict in Uruba, Colombia and the provincial government of Antioquia have adopted cooperative measures to support women victims. Further, Australia's Programme of Assistance for the Survivors of Torture and Trauma, although not women specific, provides an avenue of support for women similar to the above programmes. The Niger is proposing to develop legal rules to punish violence against women and provide for reparation for women and girls. Lebanon plans to enact laws that regulate issues related to handicapped and political prisoners, women and men, war widows and displaced women.

96. In terms of innovative and uncommon approaches, Germany proposes not only a ban but a redirection of research funds for a new generation of mines into new minesweeping technologies and methods, as well as the training of women in this area and education of the civilian population on the dangers of landmines. Germany also proposes the support of mine victims and mine-clearance efforts through an international fund.

F. Women and the economy

97. Seventy-one plans (82 per cent) include a specific section on women and the economy or make an explicit reference to this critical area of concern. In a few cases, similar actions are planned for poverty eradication and women's economic empowerment. Although Member States adopt different approaches to improve women's economic situation, all strategic objectives included in the critical area of concern are addressed. Most countries plan to take actions on the elimination of occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination (strategic objective F.5), as well as on the promotion of entrepreneurship among women (strategic objectives F.2,

F.3 and F.4). A fewer number of countries plan to take actions towards the promotion of women's economic rights (strategic objective F.1) and the harmonization of work and family responsibilities (strategic objective F.6). Of the 71 Member States reporting, 16 made commitments at Beijing to improve women's economic situation. However, only 12 plans and strategies reflected those commitments.

98. The majority of countries (65) plan actions to eliminate discrimination in the labour market, specifically to promote and improve women's access to employment; increase women's access to managerial positions and to non-traditional fields of employment; reduce the wage gap between women and men; and improve women's working conditions. Few countries plan to take action to address the issues of sexual harassment in the workplace; women's access to employment and social security benefits; and migrant women workers. Of the instruments chosen to reach those objectives, many countries (38) focus on women's rights as workers, particularly to enforce existing labour legislation through training and the creation of mechanisms, including monitoring. Algeria plans to enhance the health of women in the workplace by monitoring implementation of and respect for labour legislation, especially with regard to women. The Russian Federation plans to bring its legislation into line with international legal agreements on equality of opportunities and treatment in the employment sphere.

99. To eliminate discrimination in the labour market, many Governments (33) also plan to strengthen women's skills and capacities by ensuring that women have access to training, including in technical and job-seeking skills, and to information on their rights. Italy plans to draft and submit to Parliament new comprehensive legislation on educational leave to enable women and men to take leave from work for a given period of time to continue their education and upgrade their skills. Some Governments plan to create a supportive environment for unemployed and employed women by introducing changes in existing administrative rules and procedures in hiring, training and promotion; training public officers; and raising awareness among private sector employers and trade unions. For instance, El Salvador plans to design a national plan for gender training for all personnel involved in implementing labour codes, laws and regulations.

100. Many Governments (45) plan actions for the harmonization of work and family responsibilities. A dual approach can, however, be observed: some countries still consider family responsibilities to be the exclusive domain of women, while others consider them to be the responsibility of both parents. Regardless of the approach, 25 countries plan to ensure that support services, such as child-care and after-school facilities, are available for working women or parents. For example, the Republic of Korea stresses that a primary objective of the plan is to reduce the burden of domestic labour through child-care facilities, after-school care and school meals. To that end, mention is made of the role of various actors, including the church and parents, and the mobilization of private-sector resources. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the United Arab Emirates is building modern day-care centres for the children of mothers who participate in the activities of the social development centres. Governments are planning other actions, such as the promotion of flexible forms of employment, particularly by reducing the gender gap prevalent in existing flexible forms of employment.

101. To reduce the burden of family responsibilities on working women or on working parents, other means will be used, such as the introduction or enforcement of leave policies (either for maternity, paternity or other family needs), the adjustment and flexibilization of working hours, and changing current legislation in relation to family, taxation and social security. Only three countries plan to improve technologies available to women in order to reduce the burden of reproductive activities (supply of water and energy, and food processing). The United Arab Emirates plans to amend some articles of the Civil Service Law to give women one hour a day off to feed and care for their children. In Greece, a pilot project offers companies competent advice during the development and organization of flexible part-time models. Many plans (32) make reference to the role of the private sector, non-governmental organizations and trade unions, in particular concerning awareness-raising and providing incentives for employers. Chile plans to study a tax-exemption scheme for employers. Twenty countries make reference to affirmative and positive actions. In Spain, a co-financed programme is to give an identifying logo to enterprises that have adopted positive actions for equality of opportunity. The enterprise can then use that logo in the marketing and promotion of products. Few plans include time-bound targets, monitoring mechanisms, and/or allocated funds for implementation and monitoring (8). Malaysia, however, plans to reduce unemployment among women to 5.8 per cent of the economically active population by the year 2000.

102. The majority of countries (56) plan to promote entrepreneurship among women, especially in small and medium enterprises. Most countries will provide women

with two types of services: credit and finance through mainstream and/or specific financial institutions, and training in business and technical skills. Some plans stress the need to create and strengthen networks among women entrepreneurs. Few countries mention the informal sector. The Ministry of Agriculture of Oman will design a special system, in cooperation with the Oman Bank, to provide facilities for women working in farming and to ensure the marketing of their products. Mexico will promote the availability of capital for institutions and organizations that support the development of the productive capabilities of women. Peru will provide access to credit for women and women's organizations. In Sweden, private industry created a business leadership academy in 1995 to support and promote women entrepreneurs.

103. Twenty-seven countries have adopted a gender perspective approach, often in conjunction with a targeted approach. Chile, for instance, will mainstream women's needs and concerns into its existing national employment information and guidance system. The Government of Sweden appointed a commission on the distribution of economic power and financial resources between women and men. The aim of the commission is to acquire further knowledge on how economic policy affects the situation of women and men so as to make differences in their economic and financial conditions visible, and to propose measures in this field. Luxembourg will ensure that women's needs and priorities are taken into account in investments to develop infrastructure. Issues related to structural adjustment programmes, globalization, subregional and regional integration and trade negotiations received the attention of few countries. Argentina will integrate equality between women and men in regional integration agreements. Ecuador will ensure that a gender perspective is adopted in economic restructuring and structural adjustment programmes. Some countries make reference to the need to ensure women's access to economic decision-making. The generation of statistics and research to increase the knowledge bases on which policies and actions should be designed and implemented, including on women's unremunerated work, is also mentioned.

104. Many plans made reference to target groups in need of specific attention. Thirty-eight countries from all regions address the needs of rural women for access to economic resources, training, information and credit. Panama will give preferential treatment to women farmers and indigenous women in the allocation of land titles. Jamaica plans to empower women household workers. Disabled women were addressed by 10 countries. Other categories of women to whom reference was made include women migrant workers, young women, married women, female heads of households, elderly women and indigenous women.

105. Actions to promote women's economic development through international cooperation are also being planned. Norway will promote gender-sensitive policies and measures in multilateral trade negotiations, and will support women's access to credit and loans, small businesses established by women, including in rural areas, and an increase in the female employment rate. The Government of Germany plans to promote small and medium enterprises among women through programmes that will provide support and finance.

106. Some countries have taken new initiatives and uncommon approaches. In Denmark, the Ministry of Labour is going to establish a database containing the many legal decisions that have been rendered as a result of the enactment of the Equal Treatment Act and the Equal Pay Act so that users may become conversant with legal practice in those areas. Greece had the first Total Equal-Quality Commendations to be awarded by an independent body in 1997. The award is intended to promote the initiative of companies in promoting equal opportunities in personnel policies. In Sweden, private industry created a business leadership academy in 1995 with the aim of supporting and promoting women entrepreneurs. The Philippines hosted a conference of the Women Senior Leaders' Network from Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries, which made recommendations to integrate gender concerns in the APEC agenda. The Philippines also plans to ensure women's equal access to land and other agricultural resources through administrative orders that will entitle farm workers who are husband and wife to 3 hectares each of land, and will award a separate certificate of land ownership agreement to each spouse. In January 1997, Australia adopted a family tax initiative as another step to improve the choices available to families on how to balance work and family responsibilities.

G. Women in power and decision-making

107. Seventy-five plans and strategies from all regions (87 per cent) refer to women in power and decision-making, and focus on ensuring women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making (strategic objective G.1). They also refer to

increasing women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership (strategic objective G.2). Seven Member States made commitments at Beijing in this area, and five countries made commitments related to international development cooperation. Issues addressed in the plans include general and specific mechanisms for increasing women's voice and representation in power structures; mainstreaming; institutional arrangements; enabling environment; training; linkages; public information campaigns; and monitoring and statistics. A few plans indicate actions at the international level to increase women's representation in senior policy-making positions. Few plans focus on increasing the number of women managers in transnational corporations, the private sector or parastatals, although it is addressed by 19 plans under the critical areas of poverty or women and the economy.

108. Most plans (59) from all regions indicate actions related to general and/or specific mechanisms for increasing women's voice and representation of women in power and decision-making. General measures include establishing gender balance and the compilation of lists of qualified women for senior policy-making positions in national, provincial, and local government; the public sector; governmental bodies and committees; political parties; and international organizations. For example, plans of Liechtenstein and Lithuania propose that all public committees and commissions formed by government representatives should not exceed two thirds of either sex. Mexico's plan focuses on the promotion of women's participation in executive and decision-making positions in the executive and judicial branches of three levels of government, in legislative bodies, the private sector, trade unions, political parties and civic organizations. Specific mechanisms (24) include quotas for increasing the number of women elected and appointed to public office, in public administration and in political parties at the highest levels. Thirteen countries link their quotas to time-bound targets. Mozambique's plan refers to a number of specific time-bound targets, including 50 per cent women parliamentarians by the year 2000; 30 per cent female representation in local government bodies by 1998; and 40 per cent women in leadership positions in government executive bodies by the year 2000.

109. Many plans from all regions address the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the area of power and decision-making, and a few countries include mainstreaming in their international development cooperation policies. For example, Venezuela's plan calls for the training of all presidential candidates from the various political parties to include a gender perspective in their respective party's platforms and programmes.

110. Several plans from all regions seek to create the necessary institutional arrangements to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making. The United Kingdom indicates that public appointments will be a standing item on the agenda for the regular bilateral meetings between the Sex and Race Equality Division and other government departments. The Philippines indicates that the National Commission on the Role of Philippine Women has initiated the creation of gender and development focal points in government departments and agencies, which serve as catalysts in mainstreaming gender concerns in their respective agencies' plans, policies and programmes. Several national action plans, with fewer in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Western Asia, mention the allocation of resources generally, including at existing levels, but very few plans refer to increasing the amount of funding available. A few plans also indicate that Governments should assist in financing activities of non-governmental organizations. A few others focus on external sources of funding from a variety of bilateral and multilateral donors, regional and international organizations, including the European Union, the Organization of American States and the United Nations Development Programme.

111. Few plans mention legislative actions in the area of women in power and political decision-making. Among these, Argentina indicates that if its quota of 30 per cent women is not met at the provincial level, the national Government is to take legal action to ensure its implementation. Ecuador proposes legal reform of the electoral code to establish mechanisms and procedures in political parties to guarantee the equal participation of women and men.

112. In terms of capacity-building, the plans address several issues, including the enabling environment, training, building linkages and partnerships, and public information campaigns. Many countries, particularly in the Western Europe and Others region, focus on a supportive enabling environment, including sharing family responsibilities between women and men, child care, better balance between personal and professional life, parental leave, flexible working hours, part-time work, meeting times and working procedures for political parties and legislatures, and transportation. Most national action plans (50) from all regions address training, including voter registration, civic education, leadership,

management, financial management and political campaign training, all with technical assistance from non-governmental organizations, political parties, international organizations and donors. In Zimbabwe, UNDP is funding and providing technical support to the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Cooperatives for a project on women in politics and decision-making to encourage women to stand as candidates in elections, build the capacity of women already in power positions and sensitize women on the need to vote for other women. Most plans (61) in all regions refer to building linkages with various internal and external partners, including non-governmental organizations, women's organizations, community-based organizations, professional associations, political parties, trade unions, academic and research institutions, the private sector and the media. A few countries identify linkages with subregional and regional organizations and donors. Many plans from all regions focus on media campaigns to increase public awareness on issues related to women in power and decision-making. Japan addresses the need to collect and disseminate information related to best practices, while Norway's plan refers to providing information concerning electoral issues to developing countries.

113. While many plans (39), with fewer in Africa, refer to monitoring and evaluation, the lack of tools, methodology and criteria are often cited. A few plans mention the need to develop indicators. Many plans (37), indicate the need to collect, use and disaggregate statistics by sex. Bangladesh and Finland, among others, indicate the use and availability of criteria for monitoring and evaluation. Research on electoral systems is mentioned as a priority by very few countries. Brazil's plan indicates that the Electoral Supreme Court is to ensure that election results are disaggregated by sex and made available to the public. Mongolia's plan refers to the collection and dissemination of information regarding women in decision-making.

114. In terms of innovative approaches, the Kyrgyzstan plans to establish a political leadership school for women. Portugal's plan indicates that if both spouses are employed in the public sector, consideration should be given to "spousal proximity", that is, their places of work should not be too distant from each other. In particular, Finland indicates that it is developing a new tool, an "equality barometer", to provide information on the experience of women and men related to personal relationships, family life, organizations, working life and society, which will be available in 1997 and thereafter will be published biennially.

H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

115. Seventy-seven national action plans (90 per cent) include a specific section related to institutional mechanisms, or make explicit reference to the creation and strengthening of national machineries and other governmental bodies (strategic objective H.1); the integration of gender perspectives in legislation, public policy, programmes and projects (strategic objective H.2); and/or the generation and dissemination of sex disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation (strategic objective H.3). Although several Member States made commitments at the Fourth World Conference on Women concerning institutional mechanisms that are reflected in their national action plans, most countries did not do so, with the Asia and the Pacific region having the most commitments concerning national machineries, and Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean having the least. Issues addressed in the plans include the creation and/or strengthening of national machineries, before or after the Conference; gender mainstreaming; legislative actions; capacity-building; monitoring and evaluation; and innovative approaches. Relatively few plans (13) established benchmarks and/or time-bound targets related to institutional mechanisms.

116. Many national action plans (34) indicate the establishment of institutional mechanisms before the Conference, while most (52) were established afterwards. Almost all national machineries in Central and Eastern Europe and Western Asia have been established since the Fourth World Conference on Women. Two examples of the creation and/or strengthening of institutional mechanisms are the establishment of a system of women/gender focal points in various sectoral ministries, and the establishment of an inter-ministerial council to follow-up the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. As the draft national plan of Bangladesh indicates, inter-ministerial coordination is being strengthened by the appointment of women in development focal points in various sectoral government agencies, departments and directorates, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and local government divisions. In order to strengthen the institutional capacity and effectiveness of the national machinery in Lithuania, the

post of Counsellor on Women's Issues was upgraded and expanded into an office with higher status, which includes an adviser to the Government on women and family issues, with additional posts of a consultant and secretary. The Women's Affairs Department in Malta was transferred from the Ministry of Social Development to the Office of the Prime Minister. Although many plans from all regions address the allocation of resources, only nine refer to the need for or the availability of increased funding. For example, the Congo's plan targets 20 per cent of its national budget for social concerns, with a portion specifically reserved for activities related to women. Viet Nam's plan specifically refers to the resource constraints of the Viet Nam Women's Union.

117. Most national action plans (44) mention actions related to the integration of a gender perspective into legislation, public policy, programmes and projects (strategic objective H.2). More countries (17) in the Europe and Others region address gender mainstreaming than in any other region. The Swedish plan indicates that experts for equality are based in each of Sweden's 24 counties, located at the County Administration Board, who are responsible for the promotion of gender mainstreaming at the regional level. The Swedish Government regularly consults with non-governmental organizations via the Equal Opportunities Commission, which is chaired by the Minister for Equality Affairs, in which 30 or more non-governmental organizations are represented. The Venezuelan plan refers to the National Council of Women, which has promoted the creation of regional and municipal organizations in order to mainstream a gender perspective.

118. Many plans (25) focus on legislative actions to facilitate the implementation of the Platform for Action. More national action plans from Asia and the Pacific and the Europe and Others region mention legal actions, while fewer plans from Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean do so. The Australian plan indicates that the Office on the Status of Women has been involved in a cooperative legal reform project between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to develop uniform national criminal codes. Turkey indicates that a draft bill amending the Civil Code has been prepared by women parliamentarians and submitted to Parliament which, if enacted, would automatically remove many reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

119. In terms of capacity-building, most plans (55) focus on actions related to training in general, including leadership, management and financial management training. However, only a few national action plans refer to specific actions to train policy makers to strengthen their capacities to more effectively mainstream a gender perspective into legislation, public policy and governmental programmes and projects (strategic objective H.2). Argentina's plan indicates that there is an exchange of training and technical assistance staff between government offices and States in the ECLAC and ECE regions. Most national action plans (64) from all regions address actions pertaining to building linkages and partnerships with non-governmental organizations and other actors in civil society. Other non-governmental organizations identified as outreach partners include women's organizations, professional associations, trade unions, academic and research institutions, women's centres, political parties, human rights groups, churches, the media and the private sector. India's national action plan specifically refers to the need to establish linkages with the banking sector, corporations and the private sector in general. However, relatively few plans (20) indicate actions related to outreach and linkages with the private sector, despite its potentially important role, particularly in terms of resource mobilization. Many plans (41) from all regions refer to public information campaigns on issues related to the advancement of women, gender mainstreaming, and consciousness-raising concerning women's rights.

120. Although most national action plans (44) in all regions refer to monitoring and evaluation, only a few countries mention the availability of specific indicators, while several refer to the need to develop tools, methodologies and indicators. More countries in the Europe and Others region and in Asia and the Pacific focus on actions related to monitoring and evaluation than in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Canada's is one of a few plans which indicate the availability of evaluation criteria, tools or a methodology for monitoring. The plan refers to its 10 years of accumulated knowledge and experience using the gender-based approach to women in development of the Canadian International Development Association, including the experience of other Governments and its collection of extensive resource materials developed worldwide. Zimbabwe's national action plan indicates that it has developed indicators for monitoring in all 12 critical areas of concern and in agriculture in order to monitor and evaluate progress achieved, identify bottlenecks and take appropriate corrective action.

121. Most national action plans (50) from all regions refer to actions concerning the collection and dissemination of statistics, information and research. Many plans focus on specific actions, including the establishment of information centres to collect, analyse and disseminate all types of information related to gender, conduct gender-based research, gather sex-disaggregated statistics and create data banks. Some plans do not refer to the general need for improved quantitative and qualitative indicators. Australia's national action plan includes a comprehensive section on how to strengthen the collection and use of statistics. Its plan also indicates that technical advice is available on how to measure remunerated and unremunerated work in national and satellite accounts utilizing criteria developed by the Australian Agency for International Development. Kyrgyzstan's plan mentions that 50 women's centres will be established. The Mongolian plan focuses on actions to develop a national database on gender issues, including data on the employment of women and men in the formal and informal sectors, wages, time allocation between productive and household work, access to loans and poverty, which are to be reflected in national statistics. Belarus indicates that the establishment of a database on women in the public sector will be initiated by the Ministries of Defence and Statistics and other central administrative bodies during 1996-1997.

122. In terms of innovative or uncommon approaches, Ecuador has exchange programmes between officials in sectoral ministries and the Ecuadorean Women's Institute in order to facilitate and strengthen the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the substantive work of those institutions. Australia is also developing an international classification system of activities for time-use statistics that are sensitive to gender differences in both remunerated and unremunerated work. Mali's plan explicitly addresses the mobilization of resources for nationally selected critical areas of concern, and indicates the annual budgeted amounts and the funding source(s) for each sector over a five-year period from 1996-2000. The plan of China refers to the establishment of a national women's data bank and a classified women's statistical index in the state statistical system. Zimbabwe's plan mentions that gender focal points were established in all Government Ministries at the deputy and under-secretary levels.

I. Human rights of women

123. Seventy national action plans from all regions (81 per cent) prioritize the human rights of women, with 15 reflecting commitments relating to human rights made at the Beijing Conference. The overriding response in most plans, however, is to improve the availability of information and education in respect of human rights through public information, education campaigns and cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

124. Some plans emphasize the importance of international human rights treaties, as well as the promotion of gender equality and mainstreaming in international bodies, including human rights bodies. Finland plans to work for the integration of a women's perspective in all human rights activities, including the work of human rights rapporteurs. Several States register their intention to incorporate a gender-sensitive approach in reporting under human rights treaties generally. Some Member States plan to strengthen cooperation and coordination in all human rights forums with a view to strengthening the human rights of women.

125. The focus of many plans is on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and its promotion through ratification, withdrawal of reservations and encouragement of its implementation. Brunei Darussalam and the United States identified the ratification of the Convention as a priority, while other plans stress its promotion, with Canada and Finland emphasizing the importance of its effective implementation. Several plans address planned withdrawal of reservations to the Convention. Sweden plans to continue its practice of objecting to reservations incompatible with the Convention. Some plans, predominantly from Europe, express support for the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Convention, with a number committing themselves to active participation in the open-ended working group of the Commission on the Status of Women on this issue.

126. A number of plans address national action to promote and protect human rights of women generally. For example, Brazil plans to establish a national programme for human rights that will emphasize the defence of women's rights. Some promise either the creation of specific national institutions for the promotion and protection of women's human rights or the strengthening of existing institutions. For example, Bulgaria proposes the creation of an institution of the National Assembly directed at gender equality, while

Colombia plans an institution to inform women of their rights. Finland's plan describes the Division on the Human Rights of Women established under the Advisory Body for International Human Rights Affairs in 1997 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

127. Forty-five plans from all regions describe initiatives to review national laws in line with the Platform for Action objective to ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice (strategic objective I.2). The majority of plans indicate general intentions to review, while several put forward detailed programmes. Many plans (18), several from the European region, promise to embody the principle of equality between women and men in national legislation. A few plan to entrench explicit constitutional guarantees of equality for women and/or enact legislation to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. Chile plans to include the principle of equality between women and men in Articles 1 and 9 of its Constitution, while Ecuador intends to amend its Constitution in accordance with its international human rights obligations. Zimbabwe has identified statutes, such as the Communal Land Act and the Guardianship of Minors Act, which require amendment to conform with the Convention. Other plans, including that of Cambodia, promise the enforcement of specific constitutional provisions, such as those ensuring equal access to essential services, such as health and education. Trinidad and Tobago plans to legalize the status of common-law wives.

128. The provision of gender-sensitive human rights education and training to public officials features in a number of plans. For example, Chile proposes workshops for lawyers and judicial personnel, and the United Republic of Tanzania focuses on training female public officials. Many plans, among them several from Latin America and the Caribbean, plan to submit details of specific programmes in due course.

129. Many plans (18), including several from Latin America and the Caribbean, outline intentions to review and amend criminal law and procedures. Several address the elimination of violence against women. For example, Belarus proposes the introduction of penalties to ensure the payment of child support and the revision of legislation in relation to sexual violence. China plans the introduction of procedural improvements where complaints by women are concerned, while procedural improvements with respect to prosecution of women, especially indigenous women, are planned by Mexico. India intends to introduce procedural reforms to facilitate legal proceedings relating to violence against women, including allowing local voluntary organizations to lodge complaints in that context. Prison and penitentiary law reforms are proposed by El Salvador and Venezuela, and the review of laws on sexual abuse and domestic violence by Panama, Cambodia and Liechtenstein. Efforts to address violence against women, the abduction and trafficking of women and illegal activities in the context of prostitution are proposed by China. A number of plans make reference to female genital mutilation, violence against women with disabilities, indigenous women, war widows and women in prison. Several plans propose the appointment of an ombudsperson on this subject.[19]

130. Legal literacy is addressed in 43 plans from all regions. The majority of plans promise the translation and dissemination of information relating to the equal status and human rights of women. Many plans, several from Latin America and the Caribbean, propose the dissemination of information on national legislation and its impact on women, while some make reference to the elaboration of guidelines on the use of the justice system or the exercise of women's rights.

131. A number of plans (21) from all regions emphasize cooperation with women's groups, non-governmental organizations and the media. For example, Indonesia plans to organize seminars and workshops in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, and will use the results to formulate government policy. Lebanon plans to establish, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, offices to provide free counselling for women. France plans to support educational programmes for migrant women's groups.

132. The promotion of human rights education, including the legal rights of women in school curricula and public campaigns relating to the equality of women and men in both public and private life, features as an aim in some plans from all regions. Nineteen plans propose the inclusion of information with regard to international and regional human rights standards in public information, human rights activities and adult education.

J. Women and the media

133. Forty-six plans from all regions (53 per cent) focus on "Women and the media" as a priority. Most countries follow the dual approach suggested by the Platform of Action in its two strategic objectives, but greater attention is devoted to promoting a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media (strategic objective J.2) than to increasing women's participation in the media.

including in positions of decision-making and their access to new technologies (strategic objective J.1). An additional focus of the majority of plans is on how to use the media as a tool to eliminate gender inequalities, in particular through campaigns on such topics as sharing of responsibilities or political participation. Only one Member State made a voluntary commitment at the Fourth World Conference on Women on women and media regarding new information technologies for women, an area also mentioned in its national action plan.

134. With regard to the elimination of the stereotyped portrayal of women, few plans mention the continuation of existing programmes, such as the monitoring of advertisement and the establishment of media watch committees. Sixteen Governments refer to the introduction of regulatory mechanisms or codes of conduct, proposing that TV, radio, advertisement agencies and written media be encouraged not to use discriminatory, violent messages, to apply self-regulation or to introduce necessary guidelines into the media professional's ethical codes so as to avoid stereotyped and degrading portrayals of women. Some Governments express their intent to draft and adopt appropriate legislation against pornography and for the protection of children and adolescents. Programmes of public broadcasting seem to be subject to more regulation concerning the portrayal of women and elimination of images of violence, as is the case in France, while other plans reach also out to independent production companies working for public corporations or the private communication sector. Some plans mention specific measures to prevent the exploitation of women and girls in the mass media. Indonesia, for instance, plans to strengthen the status of censorship institutions to alleviate stereotyped images.

135. A few Governments encourage the production of educational materials on gender-related issues and their dissemination, either through governmental or private channels. For example, Finland seeks to educate consumers and make the public aware of men's and women's behavioural models and norms represented in advertisements. Reference is also made to the encouragement of new information technologies and women's communications networks, including electronic networks. The importance of radio as a means of communication is highlighted in a few plans from Latin America. Chile refers to agreements between women's networks and regional and local radio stations to broadcast information useful to women. Cuba focuses on the promotion of women's participation in community radio programmes.

136. To increase the overall number of women working in the media and to create an enabling environment is a goal set by some Member States, while others, in particular in Latin America, plan to increase the number of women in positions of decision-making. Two Member States set benchmarks for women in the media and thus specify the action suggested in the Platform.[20] The United Kingdom's goal is to reach 40 per cent women in middle and senior management and 30 per cent for top executives by the year 2000 in public broadcasting. The Republic of Korea wants to increase the number of women in the various committees overseeing the broadcasting field to 30 per cent by the year 2005. Networking among women media professionals, including electronic networking, is suggested in some national action plans from Latin America. Several Member States from Western Europe and Others and Latin America and the Caribbean plan to collect data on women in the media or to evaluate women's contribution to the media. A few action plans from Asia and the Pacific and Latin America propose training for women communication professionals. Some Member States propose gender sensitivity training for all media professionals, men and women.

137. Allocation of resources is mainly mentioned in the context of funds for the development of cultural programmes and radio-TV-broadcasting networks dedicated to women and produced by women, as mentioned in Romania's plan. A few countries from Latin America refer to the creation of national awards and prizes and the allocation of portions of funds for culture and the arts to women projects but do not provide details on the level of funding. A few refer to international assistance. Oman urges international organizations to provide financial assistance to the Government and to non-governmental organizations to train women and men working in the media.

138. Several Member States mention the importance of gender mainstreaming in communication policies at the municipal, state and federal levels. A few Member States specify institutional arrangements that would assist in such implementation. For instance, Brazil plans to establish a communications council within the Ministry of Communications, with the involvement of the National Council for Women's Rights.

139. Some national action plans extend actions beyond the media into arts and culture, including the creation of specialized collections on gender issues in libraries, or

by showing the historical contribution of women, as mentioned by Ecuador. In its draft plan, Pakistan promotes street theatre and local forms of entertainment. Some plans give attention to the artistic expression of special groups, such as indigenous and rural women, urban women, disabled women and women prisoners.

140. In terms of innovative approaches, Spain, for instance, will empower its monitoring mechanisms, the Observatorio de la Publicidad and the Consejo Asesor de Imagen, while the United Kingdom suggests the appointment of a "portrayal adviser" who would work on individual projects studying portrayal issues.

K. Women and the environment

141. Forty-two plans (49 per cent) consider the implementation of the critical area on women and the environment. In comparison, only two countries made a voluntary commitment at the Beijing Conference on this issue. An analysis of the plans shows that they follow the conclusions and recommendations of the Platform for Action. Many plans consider this critical area in the broader context of achieving the goals of sustainable development, underlining the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies and programmes, and recognizing the importance of increasing women's participation in decision-making on environmental matters.

142. More than half of those responding under this area propose policies and measures to ensure that women have access to and are adequately represented in decision-making bodies, and have access to environmental information and education (strategic objective K.1). Pakistan is the only country which identified in its draft plan concrete quotas for women's participation in decision-making to be filled by the year 2000, targeting 10 per cent of women in key environmental ministries and departments, and 15 per cent in key positions in autonomous bodies and advisory boards in this field. The Government is also planning to double that quota progressively in the future.

143. The most widely used approach taken to increase the participation of women in environmental decision-making is to provide the necessary education and training. The United States of America, for instance, will reinstate the Greater Leadership Opportunities Programme, in which minorities and women are provided with training to enhance their skills and promote the professional growth. Other programmes encouraging women to establish careers in the environmental sciences and management are mentioned. In Eastern Europe, Romania identifies this issue among its priorities, with a special focus on the increase of women's participation in the protection of the national ecosystem. One of the long-term tasks of Bulgaria is the elaboration of a national strategy for ecological training and education, with a special focus on women and promotion of their role in environmental protection. Similarly, the Islamic Republic of Iran is organizing a campaign to publicize the role of women in protecting the environment. Germany has launched a specific programme entitled "Who is who in the women's environmental sector" in order to improve the exchange of information on women and the environment.

144. There is also an understanding of the need to strengthen cooperation between women's non-governmental organizations and national institutions dealing with environmental issues. Lebanon, for example, intends to strengthen the role of women in the management of natural resources and involve women's non-governmental organizations in the design of environmental protection laws. Ecuador plans to establish closer coordination between all concerned actors in order to increase women's participation in environmental decision-making, including indigenous and black women. In addition, scholarships for the training of women in the area of science and technology are being provided.

145. Thirteen Member States commit themselves to promoting mainstreaming of the gender perspective in policies and programmes for sustainable development (strategic objective K.2). Proposed actions encompass the revision of legislation, establishing special institutional mechanisms, awareness-raising campaigns and gender training. Several plans intend to introduce gender-impact assessment of environmental policies. Panama will promote gender training for public officials. Pakistan will establish, by the year 2000, mechanisms at the national and local levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women and men, with the collaboration of non-governmental organizations. Tunisia includes the establishment of a number of institutional mechanisms for integrating women's concerns into sustainable development planning. Bulgaria identifies among its long-term goals the preparation of regulation for public participation in the environmental decision-making, with a special focus on women.

146. Several Governments emphasize the need to incorporate gender approach and gender analysis in environmental assistance programmes and activities.

Denmark, for example, is drafting a common strategy for environmental assistance in the developing countries. Norway has already adopted a gender-sensitive strategy for its environmental assistance programmes.

147. The national action plans reviewed recognize the fundamental link between environmental hazards and potential risks to human health, especially women's health. Some plans propose measures, including the revision of laws, public information campaigns and advanced research, to protect women against environmental hazards, while others target women in connection with access to and usage of environmentally sound technology, including training. A few countries emphasize the importance of promoting the production of environmentally safe products and using adequate eco-labels.

148. In terms of innovative approaches, the United Kingdom will promote a campaign involving women's non-governmental organizations in the preparation and drafting of a national air quality strategy. Ecuador is considering introducing a gender perspective into its national plan on environment.

L. The girl child

149. Twenty-seven Governments from all regions except Eastern and Central Europe (31 per cent) focus on the girl child as a priority issue in the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action. Most plans that address the issue do so in the context of all 12 critical areas of concern. The emphasis on the girl child is strongest in the Western Europe and Other region, where 8 national action plans refer to it. In Africa, only 6 out of 16 plans submitted consider the girl child a priority, focusing mainly on education. In addition to the 27 plans, five others focus on the specific health status of the girl child under the critical area of concern "Women and health". At the Fourth World Conference on Women, three Member States made a commitment to undertake actions to improve the status of the girl child in education and health. The same Member States do not address the girl child as a specific strategic objective in their national action plans but indicate actions in favour of girls under the strategic objectives education and health.

150. Among those Governments who plan action related to the girl child, top priority is given to education (strategic objective L.4). Many plans focus on girl's school enrolment, drop-out rates due to pregnancy or early marriage, gender-sensitive teaching materials and curriculum, and gender-training for teachers. For instance, Egypt intends to provide additional funding for girls' schools.

151. Health and nutrition (strategic objective L.5) are other areas of high priority. Most plans elaborate on the reproductive health and nutritional needs of girls. According to its draft plan, Botswana intends to raise awareness on girls' special vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases and to abolish harmful traditional practices. A few Member States refer to female genital mutilations under the heading girl child, while a larger number, including States from Africa, do so under health and human rights. Australia, for example, proposes to train health practitioners on the treatment of girls who have undergone female genital mutilation. France is considering raising the maximum penalty for carrying out female genital mutilations and increasing awareness among the African population and health-care professionals.

152. The elimination of negative cultural attitudes and practices (strategic objective L.2) is high on the agenda of national action plans, in particular those from Asia and the Pacific, where Governments want to create awareness on discrimination faced by girls, including early marriage, sexual abuse and violence. Some plans indicate that legal action will be taken. Palestine indicates that it will raise the minimum age for marriage. Botswana will enforce laws on full consent to marriage and ensure girls' equal access to inheritance. Recognizing the importance of awareness- raising campaigns, the Philippines will declare the fourth week of March each year as the week for the protection and gender-fair treatment of the girl child. The Government is also developing a Philippine Plan of Action for the girl child. The United Arab Emirates have established girls clubs in various locations to give girls an opportunity to practice sports and engage in cultural and social activities. The Government of Myanmar has conducted advocacy meetings aimed at eradication of negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls in five states and divisions. The remaining 11 states and divisions will be covered by the year 2000.

153. Another priority is the eradication of violence against girls (strategic objective L.7), with a clear focus on sexual exploitation, prostitution, child pornography and trafficking. Australia and the United Kingdom have enacted laws which make it a criminal offence for their citizens to engage in sexual conduct with children abroad. Norway is developing new strategies to fight against child pornography and paedophilia networks on the Internet. In Asia and the Pacific, Indonesia will increase the

penalty for acts of violence against the girl child and sexual abuse.

154. Most plans do not contain concrete strategies and benchmarks. Some Governments report in a detailed way on actions that they have already taken. In terms of future strategies, all plans remain at the level of proposals and general policy recommendations. In its draft plans, Pakistan is an exception: it sets clear time-bound goals with regard to legal action and data collection.

155. There is little reference to gender-mainstreaming efforts. Most plans mention the need to disaggregate data by age and sex, and to eliminate gender stereotyping. However, no mention is made of the differential needs and interests of girls and boys and how to take them into account in policies and programmes targeted at children, except in the plan of Ecuador, which proposes to analyse its existing national plan for children from a gender perspective and to include special measures for the advancement of girls.

156. In terms of innovative approaches, Norway addresses eating disorders, a problem common among many adolescent girls that is not raised in the Platform for Action. The Government of Norway has initiated comprehensive courses and the training of school and health professionals, and will open a resource centre on anorexia and bulimia. Spain and Argentina also refer to eating disorders under the health section.

M. Other priorities

157. Some national action plans set additional priorities to the 12 critical areas of the Platform for Action. Women and the family is mentioned as a separate strategic objective in 15 national plans from all regions except Eastern Europe, especially in Western Europe and Latin America. Although Member States reiterate respect for the equal rights of all family members under this strategic objective, they largely advocate the equal sharing of household responsibilities. A few national action plans from Western Europe focus exclusively on measures to accommodate professional and family life, and emphasize the role of the father within the family. In Denmark, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health plans to set up a special committee to find ways to reinforce men's roles as fathers and grandfathers, and to make child care more attractive to men by introducing leave schemes.

158. Although many national action plans target specific groups of women under a number of critical areas of concern, some stress the importance of those groups by giving them priority. The majority propose actions in favour of rural women. For example, Mongolia intends to create a favourable environment for the advancement of rural women through the development of rural centres with social, educational and cultural facilities. Panama will develop programmes to promote the integration of rural women in the labour market, property laws, access to credit and new productive technologies. Other plans target migrant women, indigenous women or women with disabilities.

Notes

[1] See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[2] Ibid., para. 297.

[3] Costa Rica, Ghana, Kenya, Malaysia.

[4] Croatia, Kazakhstan.

[5] Fiji.

[6] See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women* ..., paras. 301-305.

[7] Ibid., para. 349.

[8] Ibid., paras. 353 and 358.

[9] Ibid., para. 350.

[10] Ibid., paras. 80 (b) and 81 (a).

[11] Ibid., para. 81 (b).

[12] Ibid., para. 85 (a).

[13] Ibid., para. 106 (i).

[14] Ibid., para. 106 (l).

[15] Ibid., para. 106 (w).

[16] Ibid., para. 106 (d).

[17] Ibid., para. 106 (k).

[18] Ibid., para. 124 (k).

[19] Ibid., para 232 (e).

[20] Ibid., para 244 (d).

Annex

Respondents that submitted national action plans and strategies

Algeria
Argentina
Australia
Austria
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Belarus
Bolivia
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei Darussalam
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Cambodia
Canada
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Cuba
Czech Republic
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Finland
France
Germany
Guinea
Haiti
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kyrgyzstan
Lebanon
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Mali
Mozambique
Myanmar
New Zealand
Malta
Mexico
Mongolia
Morocco
Niger
Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Romania
Russian Federation
Slovakia
Spain
Swaziland
Sweden
Syrian Arab Republic
Thailand
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Uganda
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Vanuatu
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Zimbabwe

Observer

Palestine